

FDR COMPLETES TOUR; HEADING HOME

ABOARD USS FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (CVA-42) IN THE INDIAN OCEAN, Jan. 30--This attack aircraft carrier has completed a combat deployment with the Seventh Fleet in the Western Pacific and is now enroute to her homeport of Mayport, Fla.

The FDR will return to Mayport after an absence of over eight months during which she conducted combat operations against North Vietnamese military targets. The carrier is commanded by Captain Martin G. O'Neill, 49, of Jersey City, N.J.

During her period on the line in the Tonkin Gulf, the FDR served as a member of the Seventh Fleet's attack carrier striking force. She launched many air strikes against the North Vietnamese military machine as part of the Navy's continuing effort to halt the flow of war supplies to the enemy in South Vietnam.

Planes of FDR's embarked Carrier Air Wing One flew more than 7,000 combat and support missions despite adverse weather conditions during the latter part of the deployment.

An Atlantic Fleet attack carrier, the FDR left Mayport for her Western Pacific duty on June 21, 1966. When the warship returns to Mayport in late February, she will have travelled more than 94,000 miles--a distance almost equal to four trips around the world at the equator.

During the deployment, the Roosevelt visited the ports of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines; Yokosuka, Japan and Hong Kong, B.C.C.

Built at the close of World War II, the FDR has been in service for more than 21 years. The second of the "Midway" class carriers, she originally displaced 45,000 tons. After completing modernization and conversion programs, the FDR now displaces 65,000 tons.

Squadrons and units of embarked Carrier Air Wing One included: Attack Squadrons 12, 72 and 172 of Cecil Field, Fla., flying A4 Skyhawks; Fighter Squadrons 14 and 32 of Oceana, Va., flying F4B Phantoms; a detachment of A3 Skywarriors of Heavy Attack Squadron 10, from Whidbey Island, Wash.; a detachment of prop-driven E1B

Tracer radar planes from Airborne Early Warning Squadron 12, Norfolk, Va.; a detachment of RF8G Photo-Crusaders from Light Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron 62, Cecil Field, Fla.; and a detachment of air-sea rescue helicopters from Helicopter Combat Support Squadron Two, Lakehurst, N.J.

Though doctors predicted he would probably recover completely, he could no longer continue in command of the FDR.

On Jan. 7, Capt. James D. Ramage, Chief of Staff, Commander Task Force 77, arrived on board and took temporary command until the new Commanding Officer, Captain Martin G. O'Neill could arrive from the States. Under Capt. Ramage, the FDR set sail for Hong Kong and five days of relaxation and shopping. Then on Jan 12, Capt. O'Neill arrived from San Diego, Calif., and assumed command in Hong Kong harbor.

Leaving Hong Kong, the FDR steamed for Subic Bay to take on fuel and supplies for the long trip home. Bad weather delayed the arrival in Subic until Jan. 17. After remaining in Subic for only one night, the FDR headed for the open sea in the late afternoon of Jan. 18. Transiting from the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean, the FDR began to breath easier as the heavier demands of the war zone were left behind.

Reaching the Equator again on Jan. 22, at longitude 107.059E, King Neptune stepped foot on board for the second time in seven months and found 642 Pollywogs among the crew who had not been initiated into the silent mysteries of the deep. These 642 Pollywogs had all come on board during the WestPac deployment, having been flown out to the FDR in the combat zone. This huge turnover in manpower is a indication of the capability and flexibility of the U.S. Navy under combat conditions.

King Neptune and his Royal Court quickly made seasoned salts and trusty Shellbacks of these lowly specimens, and the FDR set sail again bound for Cape Town, Republic of South Africa, and thence to home.

Arriving in Cape Town in the early morning of Feb. 4, last minute developments in Washington now made it impossible to grant shore leave and liberty to FDR personnel in Cape Town.

Leaving Cape Town behind on Monday, Feb. 6, the FDR at last commenced the final leg of the journey home. During the eight-month deployment the gallant warrior had steamed more than 94,000 miles, a distance almost equal to four trips around the world at the Equator.

Her crewmen were battle-tested veterans to the very last man. And each man on board the FDR could proudly say: "We were there."

(FDR)